DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 245 824 PS 014 408

AUTHOR Alexander, Jim
TITLE Services to Families, with Many a Slip. Institute of Family Studies Policy Background Paper [No. 1].
INSTITUTION Institute of Family Studies, Melbourne (Australia).
REPORT NO ISBN-0-642-87926-5
PUB DATE Apr 83
NOTE 51p.
AVAILABLE FROM Editor, Institute of Family Studies, 766 Elizabeth Street, Melbourne, Victoria 3000, Australia (no price quoted).
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (120) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Failure; *Family (Sociological Unit); *Family Programs; Family Structure; Federal Aid; Federal Government; *Federal Programs; Foreign Countries; Government Role; Guidelines; *Public Policy; Services; Social History; Welfare Services
IDENTIFIERS *Australia; Australia (New South Wales); Australia (Victoria); Critical Analysis; *Family Support Services Scheme; Ideology

ABSTRACT

The objective of the Family Support Services Scheme is to find new ways to prevent the breakdown of families and the institutionalization of children. The view taken in this report is that not much progress has been made toward achieving this goal. Criticisms of and recommendations for the scheme include the following: (1) The program attempts to cover too wide a range of services; (2) The rubric of the family has been used and misused to justify a variety of services and restrictive "family" elegibility criteria; (3) Funds for the scheme should be directed specifically toward supporting services for children and their parents; (4) Services such as housing referral and information or financial counseling should not be subsumed under the scheme; and (5) Dangers exist in the return to the community of responsibility for welfare and support services. The first section of the report examines concepts of the family and their implications for the organization of social welfare services. The second section attempts to show ways in which families are shaped by government policies and programs. In order to set the context for the following chapters, the third section provides a brief historical account of the provision of welfare services for families. The fourth and final section contains a review of the development of the scheme and the principles underlying its objectives. Particular attention is given to the development and operation of the scheme in Victoria and New South Wales, Australia. (RH)

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Services to Families

With many a slip

Jim Alexander
Social Research and Evaluation Ltd
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Institute of Family Studies
Policy Background Paper [No. 1]
April 1983

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Telephone (03) 342 9100

National Library of Australia
Cataloguing-in-Publication data

Alexander, Jim.
Services to families, with many a slip.

Bibliography.
ISBN 0 642 87926 5.

1. Family Support Services Scheme (Australia).
2. Family social work — Australia. I. Australia.
Institute of Family Studies. II. Title. (Series: Institute of Family Studies policy background paper).

362.8'2'0994

Typeset by Bookset, Melbourne
Printed by Globe Press Pty Ltd
Designed by Lauren Statham

Contents

Foreword (v)

Introduction 1

1 **Ideology of the family** 3
- What is the family? 3
- Implications of family organisation 4
- Woman as the family 6
- The individual family 7

2 **Family and state** 8
- The state's welfare 8
- Family welfare 11

3 **Family services** 13
- In the beginning 13
- Getting better all the time? 15

4 **The Family Support Services Scheme (FSSS)** 18
- Development of the Scheme 18
- Alternatives to residential care 19
- Emergency accommodation and financial counselling 21
- Rationalisation of the Scheme 22
- Guidelines for Family Support Services Programme Grants Scheme 23
- Submission funding process 27
- Family aide/worker/homemaker services 28
- Other service types 32

Conclusion: Services to families? 34

Bibliography 38

List of Tables

Table 1 Allocations by service type and source of funds, Victoria, July 1977 to June 1982
2 Funding sources and allocations for homemaker services, New South Wales, 1980-81

Foreword

The Institute of Family Studies is a Commonwealth Statutory Authority established under the *Family Law Act* 1975. The Institute began operations in February 1980 and by the beginning of 1981 all staff positions had been filled. It is, first and foremost, a research and information dissemination organisation charged with conducting, encouraging and coordinating research into the factors affecting marital and family stability in Australia. As a result, the Institute has made the impact of public policies on the well-being of families a major focus of its research program.

Each major study conducted will generate data showing how well different types of families are coping under current economic, social and political arrangements. In addition, specific studies will be commissioned which will pinpoint the impact of policies in particular areas such as housing, health and income security.

As preparation for these activities, the Institute has commissioned policy background papers to be written by leading experts in each field. These papers will describe current arrangements in Australia, examine the issues that arise as a result of their operation and canvass alternative policy options. These background papers will serve a number of purposes. First, they will enable specific and more general research studies to focus on important issues and on gathering appropriate data to contribute to policy development. Secondly, they will serve as comprehensive and concise discussions of important policy areas without necessarily advocating any one particular set of policy prescriptions. As a result, they should contribute to a more informed and enlightened debate and serve as reference points for those who wish either to contribute to or simply observe and understand the process of developing appropriate family policies.

The author of this paper, Jim Alexander, has written widely in the area of service provision particularly for families and children. Previously Jim has taught Sociology of Education, Educational Psychology and Child Development at Macquarie University. He has also undertaken research into early childhood services for the Bernard van Leer Foundation of The Hague. Currently Jim works as a consultant with Social Research and Evaluation Ltd. in Sydney carrying out research mainly in the area of family services.

A series of Family Impact Seminars has been organised by the Institute in all States for 1983. The subject of the seminars is **Community Based Services** and this paper, along with others titled '*Towards a national child care policy*' and '*Social support in an Australian community*', will provide the background for discussion. Presentations by State community welfare departments and by community groups will be made at each seminar.
at each seminar.

The Institute has commissioned this paper and organised the seminars in order to present the result of its research, generate comment from informed sources and gauge reaction from the broader community.

The commissioning of papers such as this also requires considerable participation by the staff of the Institute, in the design of the brief, liaison with the author, coordination of Institute input, editing and publishing of the paper and organisation of seminars and general dissemination. Among the many staff who contribute in this way are Frank Maas (Policy Studies) and Mari Davis (Publishing).

The views expressed within the paper do not necessarily represent any official view of the Institute of Family Studies in this area. Rather they are the views of the author which the Institute is pleased to present as contributions to public debate on the provision of family services.

Don Edgar
Director

The McDonald's hamburger chain has done more to destroy the 'natural' functions of the family than a generation of radical feminists.

(Quoted in Poole, 1982:47)

Like every proper ideology, the family too was more than a mere lie.

(Quoted in Barrett and McIntosh, 1982:21)

The author wishes to acknowledge the significant contribution of Liz Alexander in formulating the original ideas and arguments contained in this paper.

Introduction

The Family Support Services Scheme (FSSS) is a current example of a *personal* family welfare program. It was first set up in 1978 by the Commonwealth Department of Social Security (DSS) within its Office of Child Care using funds from the Children's Services Program. The Scheme's stated intention is to complement the activities of state governments and voluntary community agencies with the broad aim of supporting and strengthening families, particularly during periods of crisis (DSS Annual Reports 1979-80, 1980-81). Grants to state and territory governments and to community organisations are provided for a range of services for children and their families. The funds for these grants are controlled and administered by each state or territory.

The Scheme is a program with the bold objective of finding new ways to prevent the breakdown of families and the institutionalisation of their children. However, both the rationale for the Scheme and its operation raise fundamental questions about its objectives, organisation and effectiveness. Not only are there apparent inadequacies and inconsistencies within the formulation of the objectives of the Scheme, but also between these and the objectives of other family support programs.

The expenditure by the Commonwealth of almost $20 million over six years represents a considerable financial commitment. And yet, this paper argues, although some individual services have made significant achievements in finding emergency accommodation for some homeless people, in extracting others from disastrous financial situations, in assisting others at times of personal crisis in practical ways, the Scheme itself has not progressed very far towards achieving its goals.

The FSS Scheme, the paper argues, attempts to cover too wide a range of services. The conflicting and confusing criteria of eligibility for grants associated with a submission funding process

has led to difficulties in implementation of innovative services and in creation of systematic planning for support services within each state. The paper draws attention to the ways in which the rubric of 'the family' has been used and misused to justify a variety of services and restrictive 'family' eligibility criteria. It is argued that the funds for the Scheme, coming as they do from the Children's Services Program, should not be diverted to only family services with welfare connotations, but be directed specifically to supporting services for children and their parents, and further, that services such as housing referral and information or financial counselling are better catered for and administered by those government agencies dealing with such matters (for example, housing and consumer affairs departments) rather than being subsumed under the banner of the FSSS. The paper also raises questions about the dangers inherent in devolution of responsibility for welfare and support services back to the community.

In the first section of this paper concepts of the family and their implications for the organisation of social welfare services are examined. The second section attempts to show the ways in which families are shaped by government policies and programs. Section three provides a brief historical account of the provision of welfare services for families to set the context for the discussion which follows. The final section contains a review of the development of the Family Support Services Scheme and the principles underlying its objectives. Particular attention is given to the development and operation of the Scheme in Victoria and New South Wales.

1 Ideology of the family

What is the family?

Families aren't things. They are ways of organising sexuality, reproduction, the social construction of gender, workforce participation and domestic labour. They also provide a way of thinking about those social processes (Barrett and McIntosh, 1982). As often happens, some ways of doing or thinking seem usual, ordinary and then even natural, when other ways are less common, obvious or understandable. Thus it becomes apparent that what is often presented as an analysis of what 'the family' *is*, can be more accurately described as a normative argument for what the family *should be* (van Krieken, 1980:1).

We should start from an acknowledgement that there isn't really anything identifiable as *the* family, but only varieties of familial relations (various writers such as Aries, 1965; Rapoport et al, 1977; and Shorter, 1975 as reported in van Krieken, 1980:1). These relations may be more or less functional, or dysfunctional, for family members under changing circumstances:

> . . . each individual develops within a context, under socially determined situational constraints, . . . which [vary] across cultures, across status groups, across physical, geographic and political boundaries, across families and even (for the individual child) across time within the context of a single family. Not only are these varied contexts themselves subject to more or less rapid change; change is also the essence of every individual's life no matter what the context (Edgar and Ochiltree, 1982:5).

Families are *dynamic*, and *static* concepts are of little use in describing them. To use 'the family' as a static concept is to take the diversity of forms and hold them suspended, out of their contexts. In this state all families can be called the same; justified by common and 'natural' laws; subject to their appeal; and protected, too, in this reified form by the ideological and coercive

forces of a society acting in the interests of those who best conform. Those shared ideals (or even practices) of the family continue to sustain the concept as the consensual 'norm'. But, apart from some social ascriptions (like marriage and property) and sometimes biological ones (progeny), families have as much in difference as they have in common.

The persistence, then, of a static concept of 'the family' can only be seen as a defence of one preferred form. In Australian society 'the traditional family', constituted as mother, father and child(ren) is the dominant form. Despite its increasing atypicality, this notion of the family is entrenched, and persists in detracting from the issues that are inherent in familial relations — sexuality, reproduction, the nurturance and socialisation of children, workforce participation and the performance of domestic labour. It is these issues which are properly the substance of a 'family policy'.

Rather than assessing the impacts of the different material and social conditions within which children live and the impact of changes upon them, 'the traditional family' is sometimes posed as the 'optimal form' (Isbister, 1979:1), to the point of it being inevitable. This, despite its obvious failings for some and the outright rejection of it by others.

There is nothing inevitable about any family form. 'Ties of sexuality, kinship, and biological and psychological dependence are inevitable; self-supporting nuclear families are not' (Zaretsky, 1982:193). The family is an economic, not a biological unit. It has the crucial functions of maintaining and reproducing the labour force which it does while perpetuating the sexual division of labour (Zaretsky, 1976).

That some family forms have achieved a particular status, good or bad, at a particular time under a particular set of conditions, should be the subject of our analysis.

The economics of family organisation influence the whole set of domestic arrangements from childcare through to workforce participation. Further, changes in the productive processes themselves will have consequences for family organisation. Rapid technological and social changes can mean unpredictable and uncontrollable consequences, especially for children. These have critical implications for the organisation of families and communities (Edgar and Ochiltree, 1982:6).

To use the word 'family' without recognising these distinctions in relation to a specific set of welfare services, such as those provided by the Family Support Services Scheme, obscures the different needs of different groups.

Implications of family organisation

How then are families being organised and what are the implications of their organisation in a contemporary context? The report

of the Family Services Committee (1978, Vol 1, Chapter 2) and Edgar and Ochiltree (1982) summarise a number of changes in patterns of family formation, breakdown, breakup and reformation:

- 'Divorce has increased from 10 per 10 000 population in 1971 to 28 per 10 000 in 1980 . . .
- An even greater number of marriages break down to the point of separation, desertion, wife-bashing, child abuse or a teeth-gritting but conflict-ridden 'hanging-in-there' situation . . .
- One-parent families have more than doubled from 130 600 in 1969 to 282 000 in 1981, that is 13.2 per cent of all families with dependent children in Australia . . .
- 459 200 dependent children in 1980 were living with one parent rather than two . . .
- The proportion of married women in the workforce has increased from 32.5 per cent in 1969 to 42 per cent during the last three years. . .
- The average income for married couples with dependent children was $16 580 in 1978-79, whereas the average for female-headed one-parent units was $6 130 . . .
- Unemployment is [in 1982] double the 1974 rate with close to half a million families affected . . .
- The average duration of unemployment has increased from 6.5 weeks (August 1974) to 32.7 weeks (May 1981) with the highest rate of 58 weeks being for males aged 35-54, that is men who are likely to have young children . . .'

(Edgar and Ochiltree, 1982:6-8)

Responses to these changes have ranged fom calls for restoration of the centrality of the traditional family (Isbister, 1979) through demands for its overhaul (Lerner et al, 1982), to its complete destruction (Cooper, 1971). Most important, however, is the determination by the different theorists of the relative responsibilities of the individual family and the community for the care and socialisation of children and the degree of equity and flexibility they prescribe for gender roles.

In recent years, there has been a widely publicised growth in sexual 'permissiveness', and rises in the rate of divorces and in the proportion of women who, voluntarily or otherwise, have given up the role of full time wife and mother. A highly visible and articulate feminist movement has presented a wide ranging critique of sex roles; and the politics of sexual emancipation has been carried even further with the emergence of a gay liberation movement. To a greater or lesser extent, these developments pose a threat to a deep seated ideal of the family unit: one which involves a long term and stable parental relationship, a male authority figure, a caring and ever present mother, which is insulated from the exigencies of the outside world, and which provides for the emotional and sometimes the material needs of its members. For many, the family represents a real if flawed source of warmth and support; for many too, it provides a sense of identity and validity which is otherwise lacking in their lives.

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> For these reasons, the circumstances of the apparent decline of the family can only represent a real threat to many people, the more especially as these circumstances seem not to provide for the emergence of any alternative (Poole, 1982:46-47).

Some alternatives that are posed are simplistic solutions which seek to replace the family with another ideal type, or are complex theoretical constructions which offer little immediate relief from the experience of unsatisfactory and even horrific family relations (Poster, 1978:82).

In reaction to either unconvincing or even alarming alternatives, the family, 'much idealised by nostalgia or fantasy ... [remains] the locus *par excellence* of compassionate and caring relationships' (Poole, 1982:48).

High rates of marriage (though at later ages, and with even later childbirth) and remarriage testify to continuing good faith in 'family life' in spite of the not so good experiences. And some toleration of the differences and the changes has debunked some myths and rationalised some expectations — there is life after divorce.

Despite the rapid changes in patterns of family formation, policies and services for families have not relinquished the imagery of the traditional family. Apart from the nostalgia, those traditional images of the family have also helped to maintain a very real sexual division of labour.

Woman as the family

> Man for the field and woman for the hearth:
> Man for the sword and for the needle she:
> Man with the head and woman with the heart:
> Man to command and woman to obey;
> All else confusion.
>
> Tennyson

Confusion may have characterised the rapid changes in patterns of family formation but the dependence of women, especially with young children, has not changed. Their traditional, primary responsibility for the family has consistently constrained their workforce participation.

Traditional sexual divisions may avoid confusion in role expectations but they also assign to women the positions of dependence and vulnerability. It is therefore women who must fall back on other means of support when expectations fail. Services to families, then, under the traditional division, are services to women which assist not only in maintaining family units but also in maintaining women in their domestic roles. So not only does the word 'family' obscure differences *between* families, it also obscures the divisions *within* them.

The individual family

> The spread of a society organised around self-reliance, the market, and wage labour marked a great advance, perhaps especially for women, but we should also mark its costs and limits. By the time our nation reached the early twentieth century the attempt to shore up independence through economic means had become largely defensive, and in our own time economic individualism largely betrays the promise it once held out. Neither the attempt to extend the traditionally male ideal of individual independence to women nor the attempt to extend the traditionally female ideal of nurturance to men can be based on an economic system that fosters a one-sided ideal of economic independence and a correspondingly hollow collectivity (Zaretsky, 1982:218).

Left to itself the 'individual family' is supposedly free from the interference of an overbearing state, responsible only to itself and therefore motivated to strive for the satisfaction and pride to be had from individual achievement. Yet, 'the experience of individuality is an essentially contradictory one: of autonomy (power, pride, responsibility) on the one hand, and of aggression (helplessness, frustration, failure, apathy) on the other' (Poole, 1982:44).

That cherished privacy of personal, family interaction has sometimes rendered women and children vulnerable to overbearing and irresponsible interference from within the family.[1]

The development of personal social services has, in part, been a necessary response to what are seen as the failures of individual responsibility. While the role of the state remains equivocal, the intersection of the private and public spheres is necessary, not just for the protection of women and children, but for the affirmation of their rights.

[1] An exposé of these issues is contained in:
— Pizzey, E. *Scream quietly or the neighbours will hear*, 1979
— Johnson, V. *The last resort*, 1981

2 Family and state

The coupling of the economic principles of the free market with the individualism and privatisation of the nuclear family has revived calls for the dismantling of the welfare state. Poole summarises the argument:

> It is the welfare state, not capitalism, which has led to the decline of voluntary, loving and caring relations between individuals, and their replacement by non-voluntary and impersonal transactions between a welfare bureaucracy and its clients. Further, by providing welfare support for those who leave the family or lead alternative life styles, the state encourages the decline of family relations and responsibilities. The remedy is clear: state welfare expenditure must be reduced and the responsibility for providing returned to the father, and the function of caring returned to the mother (Poole, 1982:47-48).

Or again,

> An adequate social philosophy for Australia must see the return of primary responsibility for welfare and socialisation to the family, with a consequent reduction in the size and the power of government, and a parallel return of resources from governments to families to enable them once again to tend to those whom they know and love (Chipman, 1982:16).

The development of services for families, and the family policy 'debate', need to be understood in the context of such a rationale.

The state's welfare

After World War II the compromise between the growth requirements of capital and the wage demands of labour produced the welfare state (Shaver, 1982). Although some redistribution, at least within classes, took place and some basic welfare services were developed, they were not altogether unequivocal in their effects on families. Income transfers, for example, favoured already high income males with dependent spouse and dependent children. From 1930, and particularly after 1975, the

Dependent Spouse Rebate, child endowment (later family allowance), tax scales and concessions actually disadvantaged low income, de facto and single parent families (Cass et al, 1981; Saunders, 1982).

More insidious than the ineffective attempts at income redistribution has been the impact of welfare services which have intervened at the personal level. Whether provided by the state or dispensed by the voluntary sector, many of them have been impersonal or demeaning, with 'destructive effects on psychological bonds'. Not only are regressive dependencies on the state created, but supporters of the nuclear family see the 'natural' dependency of mother and children on the father as head and provider for the family being usurped. But,

> Rather than the state undermining the family, it is difficult to imagine how any form of the family could have survived the enormously destructive uprooting that accompanied industrialisation without some intervention by the state. The issue is not whether the welfare state eroded the family, but rather in what form it preserved it (Zaretsky, 1982:195).

Both the Commission of Inquiry into Poverty (1975) and the Family Services Committee (1978) have described personal welfare services as being 'concerned with personal well-being, individual rights and personal aid as well as social justice, social order and social control' (Commission of Inquiry into Poverty, 1975).Families have been an important ordering device for the state, and welfare services to families have served it well. The maintenance of orderly families has in turn helped maintain an orderly state of affairs. Quite how the family is affected by policies and provisions is not the sole interest of a dispassionate state which has regulatory purposes of its own. While, for instance, the containment of expenditure on social welfare services has transferred the burden onto individual families (read 'women'), no straightforward pressure is applied or inducement offered for women to remain at home. Thus the rhetoric of the present British Conservative government, fired with monetarist zeal, is all for 'getting women back into the home'. But women workers in some areas are too useful to be dispensed with, 'especially in a situation of deskilling and erosion of wage levels' (Barrett and McIntosh, 1982:12-13). It seems that under some iniquitous circumstances women are allowed to trade the pot for the plough.

Against those who argue that:

> 'Thatcherism' takes a straightforward pro-family and anti-feminist stance, it can be pointed out that the position taken is in many ways far more contradictory than the support for a stereotypical nuclear family embedded in the Beveridge Report and the host of welfare policies and reforms developed in the post-war decades (Barrett and McIntosh, 1982:12-13).[2]

[2] See also Wilson, E. (1977)

Not surprisingly, both as 'personal preference' and government policy, the position in Australia is not different. In dismissing the charge of 'passing the buck', Senator Chaney, the Federal Minister for Social Security during the last Liberal government, bemoaned 'the trend . . . towards an increasing dependence on the State to provide services and welfare payments and a decline in personal services welfare payments and a decline in personal responsibility in these areas' (Chaney, 1982:8). 'Personal responsibility' rests on certain presumptions — that responsibility is justly attributed to individuals and that individuals have the opportunity and capacity to accept such just responsibility. This notion assumes an equity and efficiency in the sexual division of labour (women's at-home work, child care and maintenance of a supportive community for no wages, and men's continuous, full-time, out-of-home work for wages) as being responsible.

> To say that my personal preference would be to see a higher level of personal independence and family interdependence is perhaps to express a hopeful view. There will be those in the community who will maintain this kind of pattern, with young people living at home and receiving support from their families, with husbands and wives recognising their obligations of mutual support, with families committing themselves to the care of their aged members and parents accepting their primary responsibility for the care of their own children (Chaney, 1982:8).

Such a hopelessly inaccurate understanding of how families are constituted and endowed is little more than nostalgia which takes no notice of the unemployed, the inadequately housed and those on stretched low incomes, preferring rather a little more crowding and overstretching. They can only be preferences for 'ideal' families.

Paradoxically,

> . . . the *ideal* family is not accessible to most without the involvement of women in paid work. [and] past sources of *individual satisfaction* within the family have been founded on a sexual division of labour which still informs family practices and comes into sharp contradiction with women's participation in paid work. This division of labour is a base, and a powerful source of dissatisfaction and disunity in personal relations as well as in the arena of public activity and politics (Moore et al. 1982:10).

Further, the very notion of an *ideal* family needs to be dismissed.

> There are only possible *varieties* of familial relations, and an *ideal* family structure, across history, culture and socio-economic conditions simply does not exist . . . its continued appearance seems to be only explained by its political expediency (van Krieken, 1980:7).

Still courting ideals, the current wave of familism sweeping the USA has been strong enough to tempt an appropriation from the left. Inadequacies in the position of the right are identified:

> The right is in an impossible contradiction, because, in fact, the destruction of the possibility of loving, creative family life has been a product of the economic

> market which the right is committed to defending . . . problems grow out of the way the economy and the work place are organised (Lerner et al, 1982:4).

But Lerner's critique stops short. Although properly asserting the intersection between personal, familial relationships and the economy, it does not penetrate the problems of relations *within* the family that stem from the sexual division of labour.

Similar shortcomings belie the utopian faith of the socialist states in the equalising power of workforce participation by women. Neither increased economic independence nor the more adequate provision of child care has been sufficient to undermine the hegemony of patriachy. While women may not now be as encumbered with some parts of their motherly roles, they have not escaped the domestic bits, nor have the consequences of the social construction of male and female roles been sufficiently acknowledged.

Any analysis of family policies or services must then take account of both aspects: the *individual* or *within* family effects as well as the *social* or *between* family effects. This is no mean feat especially as some policies can have quite different impacts on different groups and similarly their consequences can be resolved in quite different ways within families. Continual scrutiny of the impacts of changing patterns of family formation in their social and economic contexts is the only way of avoiding the obscuring effects of the rhetoric of one side or another. Not that this will reduce the struggle over values and priorities. The alternative is the constant slippage by some people into fancifully idealistic formulations, and by others, into an empty antagonism.

Family welfare

The rationale for the Family Support Services Scheme projects an *intervention* by the state *on behalf of* families, claiming that its services will enhance family well-being. At first glance such intervention may seem to be self-evidently good, given the familial basis of our society. But the conventional form of a private, self-supporting nuclear unit is not inevitable or equitable nor even safe sometimes, and supports for the family, in this sense, can be as much part of the perpetuation of a problem as a contribution towards its solution.

Especially in times of economic recession traditional family dependencies can be revived to cover the containment in public expenditure. The allocation of funds by the state for personal/family welfare services hardly compensates. Nor do meagre increases in income transfers to women and children compensate for the effects of cutbacks in government spending on universal service provision — such as in housing, health, child care and so on (Tulloch, 1979). Families thus become the new location for

redistribution, *within themselves*, retaining women and children in their dependency and maintaining class inequalities.

> Since the family is constituted as the right and natural source of basic support, the state's alternatives are offered on the principle of less 'eligibility'. Poorer families are both heavily affected by workforce exclusion, and least able to provide economic support for their members during periods of dependency. Their enforced reliance on the public welfare system provides a focal point for claims of failure, reaffirms their illegitimate dependency, and proclaims their inability to survive through the market or with family support (Tulloch, 1982:10).

Families have differing capacities to absorb responsibilities and tolerate dependencies — 'families are different and families are unequal' (Edgar, 1980:6). Pressure to absorb responsibility is, however, uniformly strong, despite structural and material differences.

The substantial issue for personal, family services is whether they do help redress inequalities or are merely sops in place of more decisive social services and policies (such as income transfers, maintenance, housing, health, child care). The risk of personal services to families is that not only will differences *between* family groups remain unchanged, but so too will differences *within* them (Edwards, 1981). Worse, their personal orientation may serve to further reinforce the differences.

Cass (1981) suggests conditions under which family policies and services might reduce the risks:

- that a redistribution of resources and services in favour of *children* occurs to offset direct and indirect costs;
- that a redistribution in favour of *child carers* (women) occurs, and in such a way that it does not restrict their options other than as child carers;
- that no particular form of co-resident domestic group is advantaged;
- that the ideological emphasis on the family does not obscure the differing needs of individual members to their detriment;
- that the privatisation which masks the position of women and children is not facilitated;
- that inequalities in the wage structure and taxation system and their impacts are not obscured;
- that unemployment is not used to control labour, especially female, by neglecting the provision of children's and community services.

Personal services for families cannot alone meet such conditions. Worse, their individual orientation could undermine the possibilities for significant reforms between classes and sexes and achieve little more than some rearrangements *within* disadvantaged groups.

This essentially unsuccessful approach focusing on the individual has had a long and sometimes notorious history.

3 Family services

In the beginning

The early 'migrant' population of New South Wales was not family based. The colony was marked by a preponderance of males over females and had none of the infrastructure that an extended family offers. The sort of order that was desired was difficult to maintain without constant and blatant coercion. More covert means were needed.

> If Her Majesty's Government be really desirous of seeing a well-conducted community spring up in these colonies, the social wants of the people must be considered. If the paternal Government wish to entitle itself to that honoured appelation, it must look to the materials it may send as a nucleus for the formulation of a good and great people. For all the clergy you can dispatch, all the schoolmasters you can appoint, all the churches you can build, and all the books you can export, will never do much good without what a gentleman in that Colony very appropriately called 'God's police' — wives and little children — good and virtuous women (Chisholm, 1847, quoted in Summers, 1975:291).

Policies to foster the immigration of single women and families were *'piecemeal and fragmented'* (Family Services Committee, 1978:118;5.17). A tradition of ad-hoc policies was begun. As is the way with military governments controls were strong, fixing the conditions for everyday life. However, governments were reluctant to accept much responsibility for the impacts of their policies, resorting instead to 'victim blaming' and relenting only so far as patronising charity can.

Gold brought changes:

> . . . the last quarter of the nineteenth century [saw] the beginning[s] of important changes in public opinion concerning the state's role in social affairs. The gold rushes of the 1850s left an aftermath of social problems too large and pressing to be dealt with by anyone but governments. In New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia many husbands left wives and children destitute in the rush for land and gold. Governments in New South Wales and Victoria particularly found it necessary to take a more active interest in charitable relief. The long

SS 23

depression of the 1890s further revealed the inadequacies of existing relief systems, and the traditional resistance to state intervention in welfare matters tended to break down (Family Services Committee, 1978:119;5.20).

Not altogether convinced of their responsibility and certainly incapable of doing much about it, governments bequeathed the task, sometimes with a subsidy, to non-government welfare organisations. 'Gradually there came into being a loose network of non-government agencies throughout Victoria and New South Wales. Their role was to meet minimum needs, not to provide a comprehensive welfare program' (Family Services Committee, 1978:119;5.22). Another tradition had begun;[3] one of minimal intervention and inadequate service provision.

In the period of investment and economic growth that followed the gold bust and recession of the late 1860s, new industries gave an impetus to the formation of labour organisation with the power to make new demands of the state. (There was no longer any delusion about the supposedly *independent* state after the alliance which defeated workers at Eureka.) The Australian Labour Federation, formed in 1889, required of the state that its functions 'be extended to regulate a wide range of social and economic matters of particular concern to the working class' (Alexander, 1982:99).

A significant advance towards social responsibility, as distinct from demeaning charity, was the legislative justification of some welfare reforms at the turn of the century.[4] Amendments to the State Children's Relief Act in 1896 enabled payment of allowances to widows and deserted wives so that their own children could 'board out' with them instead of with foster parents. It took another thirty years to grant the same provision for illegitimate children.[5]

These reforms showed some 'recognition of the importance of family bonds, or more accurately, maternal ones' (Report of the Family Services Committee, 1978:120;5.24). They helped transfer some of the responsibility onto the state, provided for greater protection of children and salvaged some parental rights. A century later some have soured. Recessions bring out reactionary

[1] For further evidence see:
— Dickey, B. (1981)
— Alexander, L. (1982)
— Tierney, L. (1965)
— Roe, J. (1976)
— Kennedy, R. ed. (1982)

[4] Welfare reforms such as aged pensions were introduced. While progressive at the time, the current preference for cash payments, against the provision of direct services, can better be understood as a cost cutting manoeuvre.

[5] Again, current fostering programs are not innocent of the state's thrift. See Mowbray, M. 1983.

arguments to legitimate reneging on promises to reform, just as expansionary periods are tolerant. But the recession of the 1980s has plunged the debate back to its beginnings, with reforms themselves even taking some blame for the recession because of their unproductiveness and the inflationary expectations to which they gave rise.

Getting better all the time?

The increasing intervention of the state over the past thirty years into family services, as 'personal' social services, has been a shift away from philanthropy. But the wasting away of the old charitable trappings has presented both new possibilities and new problems. Deserving help is now less dependent upon the inquisitions and melodramatic justifications of the past. Rather, complex administrative structures have been substituted, but with at least more consistent criteria for access to general 'entitlements' and to specific welfare provisions. While these structures have become distanced from local contexts, they have also been subject to the wider scrutiny and influence of minority and disadvantaged groups pressing for recognition of their rights and needs. Further, demands for information, participation in decision making and evaluation are wringing reforms. However, while this minimal intervention has stripped off the worst features, it still smacks of charitable condescension, and is sometimes antagonistic to families by masquerading in benevolent or protectionist guise. Even the recent history of state intervention in the affairs of Aboriginal families and communities can be better understood in terms of class and racial conflict than just and warranted concern (Milne, 1982). Indeed, some practices of the state have been openly antagonistic to Aboriginal and working class families — removing children from their families in the name of family support (Wyse, 1981).

Tradition requires the intervention of the state whenever dependency and authority has broken down or been exceeded. In this way the 'dominant' family form is able to be asserted and deviation controlled. The lengths to which the state and its non-government accomplices were prepared to go has been well documented and poignantly illustrated in relation to unmarried mothers.

The Home of Hope maternity home was opened in 1882 at Newtown by George Ardill of the Sydney Rescue Work Society. As with other such institutions, the women in the Home were required to work hard at domestic chores — in this case, the laundry attached to the Home. In return for this labour they were provided, at least, with a roof over their heads and meals to eat until after the confinement. Most Homes attempted to find situations as domestics for the young women on leaving, but one can imagine few employers tolerating the interruptions to the servant's work caused by the demands of her own infant.

> One, J. Barker, of the Salvation Army, wrote: 'In the case of most of the girls that issue from these institutions, the child is torn from the mother's breast — who takes a situation as a wet-nurse or general servant, and puts her own child out to nurse. To be deprived of its natural aliment is almost certain death to the unfortunate infant. A few short weeks, and for them life's fitful fever is over. "And a happy release", some will say; but oh! to sit and watch the little tortured forms — the convulsive dying struggles of one of these innocent victims! . . . When we contemplate such wrongs, we see the excellence of God's holy laws in the marriage institution where the father is the protector and the mother the life-giver and tender, watchful guardian' (Cited in Alexander, 1982:99-100).

The 'fitful fever' of earlier times may have passed, but single parents and their children are still forced to suffer harsh conditions.[6] While some may 'see . . . excellence in the marriage institution' others experience something less.[7]

There have been extensions and flexibility in the provision of financial assistance to families (the Commonwealth Government's responsibility) which simply have not favoured poor families. Both direct benefits and taxation allowances, for example, advantage high income males (with dependent spouse and dependent children) through the Dependent Spouse Rebate as well as child endowment benefits and special tax concessions. Eligibility criteria for these family allowances, with the supposed intention of supporting family well-being (that is, as dependent women and children), operate more directly as a 'tax incentive to husbands for their wives to remain outside the work force' (Cass et al, 1981:71; Saunders, 1982). The state thus adopts a benevolence towards some families through taxation and other advantages favouring appropriate nuptial, work and domestic arrangements.

Family service arrangements work both ways. Family 'units' however constituted, are in the dubious position, in relation to the state, of being both the *recipients* and conversely, the *providers* of services. As recipients, some families benefit more from the social wage than others, while as providers they are all individually responsible for their members. In this sense the report, *Families and social services in Australia*, to the Minister for Social Security in 1978, prepared by the Family Services Committee, focuses on families as recipients of personal services while acknowledging their 'ordering and controlling functions'. In good faith, the Committee went on to identify needs and service priorities. The need to avoid the worst aspects of the orders and controls was, however, forgotten, as if the benefits must outweigh the restrictions.

[6] See Section 1 of this paper: Implications of family organisation; also Brennan, D. and Brian, A. (1981)

[7] See Johnson V. *The last resort*, 1981 and Pizzey, E. *Scream quietly or the neighbours will hear*, 1970.

While in many conspicuous ways services have become better . . . 'certainly children no longer have their ears lopped for transgressing rules of an orphanage, single parent women no longer have their heads shaved and painted with gentian violet, the diseased are no longer locked up with the deranged . . .', glaring inequities persist between and within gender, race and class divisions (Alexander, 1983).

> Everyday life is teeming with assumptions like 'things are getting better' . . . These notions of progress are widely held and believed in . . . when often they contain little more than a few grains of truth (Taylor-Cullen, 1982).

38 27

4 The Family Support Services Scheme (FSSS)

Development of the Scheme

The report of the Family Services Committee in 1978 made convincing argument for an increased *social* responsibility for families facing difficult situations or crises, often quite outside their own control and beyond their capacity to cope. In accepting this responsibility, recommendations were made only in terms of *personal* supports to vulnerable families and to those with special needs. Although the limitations of *personal* services were acknowledged early in the report (Family Services Committee, Section 1.24), the suggested services (listed on p.191), however well intended, still functioned to order and control.

There is also something of a paradox in the concern of the Committee for the well-being of families and the direction of other government policies. While careful attention was being paid to the organisation of personal welfare services for families, policies in the primary areas of employment, taxation/benefits/pensions, housing and health were making crucial impacts on those same families.

As unemployment and inflation levels soared, pensions and benefits remained fixed, and public spending on housing, health and so on was curtailed. This had the effect of concentrating the destructiveness of the recession on to an already poor and increasing number of vulnerable families. No relief was afforded pay-as-you-earn (PAYE) taxpayers, nor were the additional costs for dependent children allowed for, yet taxation avoidance practices by others abounded. Such conditions typically call for welfare intervention but not obviously for personal, family services.

Under the catch-all net of *family services* are collected a gamut of service types, philosophies, auspices, funding and administrative methods and the issues that they bring in tow. The (pilot)

Family Support Services Scheme (1978-81), funded by the Commonwealth government (variously) in all states and territories, is the most substantial recent program to date. While other programs have offered similar services and been organised in much the same ways for the same sorts of reasons (but under more self-evident titles), the Family Support Services Scheme has gathered the most disparate elements together under the rhetoric of 'the family'.

The development and operation of the Scheme over this time will be considered in relation to the issues raised so far.

Alternatives to residential care

Recommendations of the Family Services Committee foreshadowed the notion of such a Scheme (Recommendations 9). Most importantly, consistent with the *objectives* of the preceding 'Alternatives to Residential Care Program' if not its *spirit*, the Committee stated that: 'When considering the needs of child rearers and services to support and protect the child rearing function, it is essential to consider the family as a whole system, where various forms of interdependence and interaction are mutually influential' (Section 1.19, p.3).

Putting aside the other influences on the family as a part of other systems, recognition of the intersection of children's rights and needs (for care and protection) with those of their parents was a considerable advance.

> These two seemingly divergent changes in attitude to the preservation of the family [*that is, adults were better making the best of a marriage however bad, while children were considered better removed to an institution*] both reflect an increasing emphasis on the welfare of the individual and a developing understanding of the impact of the individual's family on this. The needs of the individual are, of course, the primary consideration in this analysis of the needs of the family. Yet it is believed that the functioning of a family is of central importance to the personal and social well-being of its members as individuals, hence the importance laid on families by this Report. However, also because of this relationship between individual and family welfare, it is clear that policies and services for families must include providing assistance with family dissolution and the seeking of preferred alternatives as well as providing assistance for the maintenance and continuance of families. Accordingly . . . this study of needs and services includes substitute care, women's refuges, etc. (Section 3.13, p.31; author's inclusion in italics).

This formulation takes account of the position of women in relation to the children dependent upon them, their mutual economic dependence upon men and their mutual consequent vulnerability. It fully recognises the dynamic of the 'system'.

The focus of state family welfare policies has been, traditionally, on children alone. 'On the whole, services had been directed exclusively to children in the form of residential care *away* from the family' (Wyse, 1980:1). Apart from the anomaly of *family*

policies abetting the *disintegration* of families, evidence about the negative impacts on children of separation and institutionalisation forced the reconsideration of maintaining children with their parents by providing support for them in their child care tasks, and/or through the provision of material assistance.

The Committee of Inquiry into Child Care Services in Victoria (July 1976) recommended the provision of accessible 'preventive' services to assist parents to maintain their children, and the need for an *integrated* welfare policy for children and their parents — a *family* welfare policy, rather than the dislocation that resulted from an isolated *child* welfare policy (Wyse, 1981:2). These services were to be planned, funded, supervised and evaluated regionally by the state Social Welfare Department, but operated by the 'voluntary' sector, thus ensuring a system of support *for* families (read 'women outside the paid workforce') *by* volunteers (again, read 'women outside the paid workforce').

Two further (if not conflicting) refinements were added: that these family services should be 'new and innovative' (sic) and concentrate on 'practical needs' (Wyse, 1981:3).

Whereas people dependent upon pensions or benefits or receiving only low incomes could be 'practically' supported by direct assistance (cash, or other material aid or services such as child care), 'new and innovative' services to transform the pathologies of the poor into healthy family functioning were to be offered as well, or as it happened, instead.

By 1976 the Victorian Department of Social Welfare was providing or funding 'three types of services — emergency accommodation, financial counselling and family aide — which could be considered family support services'. The provision of these services became their policy, de facto, which has continued to constrain them (Wyse, 1981:4). That is, family services were defined conveniently as those that had already been funded under the name.

Having defined *some* service types as *family* services the only problems remaining were those to do with funding and distribution. The appearance of the report of the Social Welfare Commission presented a possible solution.

After an approach from the Victorian Minister of Social Welfare (as he then was) to the Commonwealth Minister of Social Security in 1977, and some preliminary funding, a national three-year pilot program of family support services commenced. By this time, however, the program had been pushed from a number of different directions.

At the Commonwealth level, the *Child Care Act* 1972, and the plans and activities of the Children's Commission and Social Welfare Commission reset priorities and changed conditions. Important was the strong deinstitutionalisation push and the

consequences of this especially for voluntary residential care institutions. Under the Australian Assistance Plan, community based activities and services were Cinderella to the ugly institutional step-sisters. Faced with the high costs of their traditions, these organisations sought alternative funds (through the Alternatives to Residential Care [also 'pilot'] Project). However, the formation of the Family Services Committee cut across the pilot project and it was subsumed under the new Scheme. This did, however, fix one parameter of the new Scheme — alternatives to costly and dislocating residential care programs. But small and uncertain recurrent grants were not sufficient inducement for established agencies to forsake either their capital or ideological investment in property. At most, outreach-type programs (family aide or homemaker) were considered, but more as complementing scaled down, revamped residential programs than substitutes for them.

Emergency accommodation and financial counselling

At a more general level, many issues about 'supportive' accommodation and attendant services were being raised. This happened mostly in the welfare sector because housing departments and authorities, both Commonwealth and State, were generally disinterested. Overwhelmed by the increasing need for accommodation, as one of the fundamental problems facing all of their client groups, welfare agencies pressed for both new housing policies and programs as well as for the specific provision of supportive accommodation — refuges, hostels and so on.

Similarly, welfare agencies wanted funding to provide financial advice to families dependent upon pensions, benefits or on low incomes, as an adjunct to their cash assistance and other material aid services.

These three types of services — emergency accommodation, financial counselling and family aide services — were promoted by Victoria as a package of basic services, which were retitled *community services* to fit with the tenets of localism and voluntarism. For no better reason than their coincidence with the resurgence of family ideology, they were also accorded the timely accolade of *family services*. As a result, funds were obtained for a twelve month period from the Commonwealth Department of Social Security through the Office of Child Care, from the Children's Services Program.

South Australia was quick to follow, after a meeting of Ministers in November 1977 when a grant for a 'Family Support Project' was agreed to in principle. Other states and territories stumbled along behind.

While the original impetus from Victoria shaped both the content and style of the FSS Scheme, sufficient flexibility was allowed the other states and territories to 'innovate' in their own ways (subject always to the Commonwealth's approval). And they did! What emerged could hardly be called a national scheme.

Coupled with the submission funding model, anything went. The tight (though restrictive) Victorian model was quite different from the hit and miss attempts elsewhere in that it was premised on a decentralised set of relatively well integrated services — emergency accomodation, financial counselling and family aide services — and an established regional infrastructure.

Only in Victoria did the Scheme, as part of the structure of the developing Family and Community Services Program, approach anything like the 'minimum network of social services' recommended in the Family Services Committee report (Recommendation 9).

Victoria was the only state with some determination of a role for local government (Recommendation 5). While local government provided the auspice for some specific projects, its planning role elsewhere was either ignored or minimal. (In New South Wales a representative of the Local Government Community Workers' Association was a member of the Commonwealth-State Management Committee, but with a circumscribed role in relation to the dominant other levels.)

The Victorian Department of Social Welfare had the only planning system that was capable of distributing funds in a systematic and coordinated manner, and was therefore able to control to a greater extent the vagaries of a crude submission funding model.

Rationalisation of the Scheme

The Victorian submission: In June 1977, the Victorian Department of Social Welfare formulated a characterisation of family support services as part of their submission. Family services were to embody these characteristics so that:

a They are related to the needs of particular groups and must be administered at local, municipal or sub-regional levels. In some cases they can be administered at regional levels.

b They are services which are generally discriminatory and categorical in nature, because they are related to special needs of particular families and individuals.

c They are services which derive from the failure of or gaps in the provision of basic or primary or general social policies in the fields of income security, housing, child care, immigration and ethnic affairs, recreation and health.

d In this context, the nature of, and demand for, supportive services may change with changes in social policies and programmes. Supportive services themselves should contribute to the ongoing reform and development of general social policies.

e Supportive services are generally of a secondary or tertiary nature, requiring resources and skills usually found in local government welfare departments, private welfare agencies or State Welfare Departments.

f It is important to note that supportive services can also develop as part of the programmes of general or universalist community services such as child care programmes, housing co-operatives or tenants' unions, general counselling agencies, etc.

g In general terms, however, supportive services are generally developed as alternatives to more traditional programmes of residential care of children, institutionalisation of individuals, or other forms of substitute care of needy individuals.[8]

The Victorian submission defined family support services within both a particular welfare context (a, b, e, f, g) as well as a more general social context (c, d). It managed to avoid the circularity and confusion of the word 'family' (apart from a single lapse where the meaning was clear: 'family' — plural; 'individual' — singular) while locating supportive services in a welfare context characterised by:

- local, rather than central, administration;
- the priority to respond to the particular needs of some families;
- a family need focus rather than a service delivery orientation;
- intervention at a 'secondary' level to ameliorate the effects of inadequate 'primary' provisions;
- integration with general community services rather than separation; and especially
- alternatives to institutionalisation.

Guidelines for Family Support Services Programme Grants Scheme

Following the Victorian submission in December 1977, the Commonwealth Office of Child Care distributed to the states and territories guidelines for the Family Support Services Programme Grants Scheme, funded under the Children's Services Programme (CSP). Previously the CSP had 'mainly

[8] Letter from Minister for Social Welfare to Minister for Social Security, 17 June 1977 cited in Wyse, T. 1981

SE 33

provided services of a more traditional, institutional variety[9] The FSS Scheme was proposed as a complement to these services through its 'preventive role' with services to avoid family breakdown and institutionalisation of children.

The weakness of the 'preventive' notion is indicated by its conjunction with priorities to be accorded families in crisis. The difficulty in organising alternatives to institutionalisation alone would have been more than enough to keep a primary welfare service going let alone a voluntary based, community managed one with the additional tasks of supporting families with 'special needs'. In practice (as the conflict within health systems has shown), these basic goals are contradictory rather than 'complementary'[10] — either the service will aim to be preventative, with a developmental focus which depends upon crisis services being otherwise provided, or it necessarily must substitute for them.

With such a muddle of demanding requirements as innovation, prevention, crisis intervention, developmental enhancement, and such sweeping contexts as families in general, and Aboriginal and migrant groups in particular, the general aims of the program offer everything to everyone. And this, not surprisingly, given the variability of the submission funding model which was used to implement the Scheme's aims.

While the overriding objective of the Scheme was to 'ensure the provision for selected areas in each state of a coordinated family support service delivery model which incorporates services for parents and their children in accordance with the service types eligible for funding, . . . services to support families are accepted as the responsibility of many sectors in the community, including state governments, and voluntary agencies . . . [and] . . . by providing these additional funds, the Commonwealth is supplementing those already available rather than substituting for them.'[11] The amount of funds made available to the states and territories can have left no-one in doubt about the Commonwealth's intention to 'supplement' rather than 'substitute'.

Further, 'selected' areas presumes a planning model over and above the submission funding model. When these are, in the first instance, determined by idiosyncratic submissions, only an *a posteriori* planning model is possible.

Particular characteristics of the Scheme were further elaborated. The first of these required services to be developed as alternatives to more traditional programs of residential care for children, institutionalisation of individuals and other forms of

[9] Guidelines for Family Support Services Programme Grants Scheme, OCC, December 1977, p.1.

[10] *Ibid*, p.1.

[11] *Ibid*, p.1.

substitute care for children in need.[12] This was clearly a statement of the focus of the program.

Services were also to be discriminatory and categorical — 'related to the needs of particular groups'.[13] They were to be locally or regionally administered and provided by the non-government sector 'because they are largely unencumbered by legislative restrictions and can therefore diversify easily into areas of emergency client and service needs . . . [They] may also be more able to support community self-help projects and utilise the wealth of skills and personnel resources available in the community, through volunteers . . .'[14]

Although responsiveness and flexibility[15] may have been claims of, and for, the non-government sector, such claims are certainly not always borne out. In comparison with state service programs, non-government 'alternatives' are often characterised in much the same ways. There is no particular evidence that the non-government sector is differently encumbered (Bryson and Mowbray, 1981).

It is the case, however, that the non-government sector is dependent on unpaid (volunteers) and under-paid labour and 'community' facilities which need no capital funding; tolerate sharing, crowding and the like (Schuman, 1982). This prepares an appropriate setting for the ideology and practice of 'self-help'. Combined with a 'hope' for the cooperation of local government, the way is paved for the full disaster of 'localism' (Pinker, 1982). In times of recession, the retreat by governments to community based services marks not only a 'small' government containment strategy but coalesces with populist notions of localism and self-help which can be simplistic, *ad hoc* responses to the complex issues of social change in modern states. The concepts of 'community' in such states are both intangible and paradoxical incorporating both paternalistic and libertarian notions of social processes (Pinker 1982). Whereas the appeal to local demand and action rests on assumptions such as 'neighbourhood altruism', consensus and capability,[16] community/localist strategies also confront indifference, intolerance, conflict, incompetence and incapacity. This is not to imply any exemptions for centralised systems from such problems but to argue for realistic rather than idealistic or opportunistic assessments of the capacity of merely local arrangements, especially service providers, to be handed responsibility with little control.

[12] *Ibid*, p.1.

[13] Guidelines for Family Support Services Programme Grants Scheme, op. cit.

[14] *Ibid*, p.2.

[15] *Ibid*, p.2.

[16] Social Research and Evaluation Ltd. *One step forward and two steps back: the hidden problems of community management*, 1980.

The final characteristic of the scheme was its tentativeness. Grants were to be made to projects of a pilot nature.[17] The implication was experimentation and innovation. A coordinated, national evaluation was to provide information to 'form the basis of future policy guidelines'.[18]

The New South Wales submission: Tempted by the Commonwealth offer of funds, rather than any emerging plan of its own, the New South Wales Department of Youth and Community Services prepared a global assessment of needs in January 1978, but it was uselessly vague, citing among other things: 'the complexity of modern living' and 'an increasing body of knowledge in the social sciences which indicates new directions which should be taken in the future'.

While stressing the need for a 'well defined family support program', it was not satisfied by the FSSS guidelines produced by the Office of Child Care which stated that grants were to concentrate on:

- home-based services (homemaker);
- practical family counselling (household organisation; finance);
- assessment services;
- information services;
- emergency accommodation and other crisis intervention services;
- expansion and development of innovative programs (with preventive focus);
- coordination and integration of services within a region or district.

Apart from the service *types*, preferred *modes* were specified, that is, home based, integrated with other services, preventive and innovative. No particular reference was made to residential care. The criteria for funding listed, but nowhere worked out, were:

- degree of innovativeness;
- demonstrable need of an area or group;
- community/group consulation;
- preparedness of project to participate in an evaluation of their services.

Unlike its Victorian counterpart, whose tasks were the distribution and coordination of services, the New South Wales Commonwealth-State Management Committee was dogged from the outset by the various objectives of the Scheme. The Committee found it difficult to decide whether the Commonwealth 'intended any specific thrust'[19]; that is, as a program

[17] Guidelines for Family Support Services Programme Grants Scheme, OCC, December 1977, p.2.

[18] *Ibid*, p.3.

[19] (First) Minutes of NSW FSSS Management Committee, 20 January 1978.

designed to prevent children from having to enter an institution; or whether, as a pilot program, a wide range of services for different target groups should be funded and evaluated, (which would in effect, test the sorts of assumptions the Victorians had taken for granted). The representative on the Committee from the Association of Child Caring Agencies argued for the 'specific thrust' of alternatives to residential care with quite explicit objectives for evaluation. No clarification was obtained, so a 'wide range with a specific thrust' compromise was adopted frustrating serious attempts to find alternatives to institutionalisation, but not removing sufficient constraints to test alternatives.

Although District Officers of the New South Wales Department of Youth and Community Services were circularised and requested to inform community groups of the Scheme, apart from representation on the Management Committee, there was no attempt to link their work directly with the Scheme. Rather, it was to be seen as 'complement[ing] traditional approaches to Family Support'[20], that is, *substitute* care including institutionalisation.

Submission funding process

While the Victorians pondered distribution and priority questions, their service types, for better or worse, were fixed. And, moreover, there was a regional structure to assess and sustain local community initiatives.

But the 'anything goes' alternative in New South Wales, while offering flexibility and a chance for innovation, meant that service types were largely determined by the submissions they got. Following advertisements in city and regional newspapers, one hundred and ninety eight (198) submissions were received. Seventy two (72) were designated as being outside the guidelines. Forty (40) were deemed eligible for funding under other programs. Five (5) were rejected outright (one of these from a residential care institution). From those remaining, forty (40) were selected according to other criteria such as location, recommendations from Departmental officers, assessed viability of the project, 'goodness of fit' with the guidelines and so on.

Some figures on the funding decisions in New South Wales provide some insights:

- Submissions to provide counselling and marriage guidance were the most frequent (39 of 198) but none of them were funded;
- Of the 24 submissions to provide emergency accommodation, only 5 were funded;
- Of the 20 submissions to provide services for migrants, only 2 were funded;

[20] Circular to Chief, Field Division, 24 February 1978.

- Of the 15 submissions to provide homemaker-family aide services, 11 were funded.

'. . . Issues such as funding large established organisations to extend into innovative for them, [*read 'non-traditional'*] areas as opposed to the funding of new, relatively untried community groups, or, such as funding a doubtful group in an area desperately short of services, as opposed to funding an . . . [*experienced*] group in an area dense with services . . .' (Sutton, 1980) could not be resolved by recourse to the guidelines. The notions of *innovation* and *prevention* had won out over the less exotic needs for practical service alternatives to residential care.

If alternatives to residential care were to be central, then the Department's District Officers (and even Magistrates) should have been closely involved in determining the alternatives they could use. Further, information about the particular possibilities for effective intervention would then have been needed for planning and implementing the Scheme.

In no sense can the guidelines produced by the Commonwealth or the Commonwealth-State Management Committee be seen to be appropriate for developing services which would lead in any direct way to innovative alternatives to residential care.[21] The guidelines are aimed at more general provision of community information and referral accommodation, parent support and children's services and are only peripherally relevant to institutionalisation. There was no serious effort to plan and fund community or children's services as preventative 'alternatives' in their own right.

It seems that the romance of local, community based, participatory, self-help, innovatory, preventative ideas had, at that time, an ascendency which partly obscured the reality of the number of children already in residential/substitute care and the many more who would be during the time of this exaggerated pilot program.

This flirtation with supposedly new and radical solutions was part of a general resurgence of such ideas which coincided with a deepening pessimism about the ability of traditional welfare structures to cope with increasing demands under worsening conditions as if individual and local effort could withstand their effects.[22]

Family aide/worker/homemaker services

In Victoria, family aide projects received a disproportionate amount of funds although they were only one of the three service

[21] This is not to say no alternatives were produced. Problematic though it was, the Aunties and Uncles project was particularly successful in some ways with some groups. See McGahen, B. *Interim Report* November 1980, Section 3, Social Research and Evaluation Ltd.

[22] See again, Pinker, R. op. cit. and van Krieken, R. *Participation in welfare*, 1981.

types funded. More than $150 000 in 1980-81 and almost twice that amount in 1981-82 was allocated to such projects in Victoria apart from other projects funded by the Commonwealth under the Family Support Services Scheme and some with additional funds on a cost-shared basis with the Department of Community and Welfare Services.[23] This brought the total allocation to more than $1 million in 1981-82, more than twice that allocated for housing projects and almost three times the allocation for financial counselling services (see Table 1). The predominance of this more 'personal' welfare service is obvious.

Table 1 Allocations by service type and source of funds, Victoria, July 1977 to June 1982

	Allocation ($)				
	1977/78	*1978/79*	*1979/80*	*1980/81*	*1981/82*
Financial Counselling					
FACS			76 630	133 955	158 622
FSS/Commonwealth	63 235	104 249	109 517	117 262	125 748
Other — State				18 846	84 472
Other — Commonwealth					
Family Aide					
FACS			58 750	92 226	235 865
FSS/Commonwealth	125 916	333 766	367 841	399 371	416 375
Other — State				153 077	295 004
Other — Commonwealth				97 410	107 203
Housing					
FACS			92 686	142 737	138 050
FSS/Commonwealth	132 223	264 946	288 498	310 907	325 168
Other — State					
Other — Commonwealth					

Source: Department of Community Welfare Services, Victoria

As with Victoria, the homemaker/family worker projects in New South Wales were the largest group, but nowhere near as extensive.

Table 2 Funding source and allocations for homemaker services, New South Wales, 1980-81

Source	*Number of projects*	*Allocation 1980/81 ($)*
Commonwealth (FSS)	11	197 310
State	13	255 552
Other — Commonwealth	(1)	24 000

Source: Department of Youth and Community Services, New South Wales

[23] Additional Commonwealth cost-shared allocation: $97 410 in 1980-81 and $107 203 in 1981-82.

But is the predominance (numbers and cost) of homemaker/family worker projects also an indication of their centrality to a concept of family support? If it is not, then the Victorian government, for all its administrative equanimity, is in a somewhat awkward position. With the recent relocation of the housing projects (the second major group funded under the Family Support Services Scheme) to the Victorian Housing Ministry, and the obvious implication that financial counselling services goes with Consumer Affairs, the dominance of family aide projects is even more conspicuous. Yet these are the very ones furthest from the progressive ideal of universal community services and still smack somewhat of the residue of tertiary intervention.

In order to counter such a charge, a critique of practical, discreet and categorical services has emerged. Such services are said to be inappropriate for 'multi-problem families'.[24] While the practical, preventive orientation of the Scheme may widen the parameters of eligibility, and catch those missed by primary services, the FSS Scheme may not be *sufficient* to redress the problematic history of some families for whom, like it or not, more sustained and more 'expressive' emotional support may be necessary. Further, with the pressure to deinstitutionalise coinciding with reduced funding for community health and welfare programs, heavy demands to accept increased responsibility are being placed on family aides/workers by both families themselves and by other health and welfare workers. Thus while the regressive connotations of tertiary intervention cannot be escaped, neither can the pressure of service demand be ignored.

> [While] the support provided by generalist community based services and supportive friends and neighbours is clearly important for all Victorian families . . . At the same time, it is recognised that some families require more intensive and specialist support to enable them to provide a satisfactory environment for the care and nurturing of their children. In particular, families suffering severe stress or crisis may lack the resources, knowledge, confidence and energy to use the generalist support services available to them. Other families do not have supportive friends and neighbours to assist them, and many families suffering ongoing stress have exhausted the limits of neighbourly support (Rationale for Funding of Family Support Services in Victoria, c.1982, DCWS).

Clearly a service focused on poor women at home with their children can fall prey to both individualistic conceptualisations of their problems and offer 'solutions' that are little more than maintenance or rehabilitation props.

Ways out of this residual trap can be found. The alternative strategies developed by women's housing and health groups provide some clues. And so do some family aide/worker projects. Some of these groups rejected the 'maintenance' props of information, 'support' and role modelling, and worked differently to do

[24] Children's Welfare Association of Victoria (1981).

more than *reorganise* domestic arrangements by obtaining or providing services, aiming instead for *reformation*. Rather than tolerate the isolation of a domestic context, these groups have constructed socialised contexts away from the very situations that others would have women cope with. Rather than teach parenting skills, they organised child care; rather than homemaking skills, they organised job training or tried to find paid work outside the home; rather than encouraging a dependent compliance, they supported self-assertion. And felt they got somewhere; so far that in some projects the turnover of ex-clients-cum-volunteers who left to take on paid employment disrupted the efficiency of the service!

More common, however, was the family aide/worker busying herself with the servicing of 'mothers in need', keeping them keeping on, providing little relief but encouraging them in the values and practices of a better kept class. Many women clung on faithfully. Others resisted. Getting out of their homemaking roles was the first step in acknowledging their dissatisfaction with simply mothering on. They felt unfairly left alone to cope, but in the supportive social context offered by some services, penetrated the inconsistencies and injustices of a sexual division of labour which had frustrated them.

Variations on the home-based family aide/worker model have been tried. In New South Wales several projects were loosely grouped as Family Centres, and of these some merged in service style and objectives, over the three years of the pilot Scheme, with the most developed being family worker/homemaker projects.

The base from which the Family Centres operated enabled them to offer a range of activities and services for children as well as for parents, not unlike some of the Victorian Neighbourhood Houses. These Centres increasingly became focal points for a range of community activities and groups, giving them the legitimacy of a general community facility. But, at the same time referrals by health and welfare workers increased the need for particular attention to some users — and an outreach/family worker component was developed. This outreach component differed in a fundamental way from the home-based model, in that the purpose of individual contact was to facilitate usage of more general services rather than to be the service itself.

Some family worker/homemaker projects quickly recognised the restrictions of an individual, home-based approach and developed centre-based activities, initially for their own users to make contact but widening to become more general community centres. Similar developments have occurred in Victoria with a convergence to a centre-based outreach model which has the possibility of avoiding the remedial connotations of home-based approaches and yet is capable of personalised contact.

Other service types

Similar issues confront the other service types. The tension remains between the pressure to provide individual service and developmental activities such as information, education and social action.

In relation to financial counselling, for example,[25] developmental activities such as information, advocacy and legal advice, can be contrasted with the minutia of budgeting advice. The auspice of the service and its degree of integration with other services affects its location along the 'remedial-developmental' continuum.

At the remedial end, financial counselling looks to be little more than help with the 'belt-tightening' that poor families always face which is sometimes little more than a sop to financial institutions.[26] This raises a number of social and political issues about funding financial counselling as a community welfare service at all.[27] At the developmental end, the activities can be a significant part of more comprehensive assistance to people on low incomes or further help to alter the very conditions which place people in financial jeopardy.

In any one of the three service types under the FSSS, the limits of personal welfare services must always be faced. Emergency accommodation and housing information services, for example, make the point. Welfare issues are substantially different from housing issues (though closely bound) and must not confuse the conditions necessary for the resolution of the housing issues themselves.

> Information about the housing system and assistance in managing that system *can* reduce the inequalities suffered by vulnerable minorities.
> However, whilst it can promote access to housing resources, a Housing Information Service cannot solve housing problems where the solution lies in other kinds of resources.
> Information about eligibility may increase the chances of the low income family gaining access to public housing. But if there is not sufficient low cost housing available for all who need it, information is not the answer, a higher investment in public housing is needed.
> Information and advice centres cannot increase what is not there,or themselves break down discriminatory barriers against the poor, sick and disadvantaged. (Department of Housing and Construction, Housing Information and Advisory Services Workshop, Adelaide, 8-9 April, 1978).

[25] For a fuller description and discussion of other service types see the various evaluation reports of the Family Support Services Scheme.

[26] In at least one case, funding support for a financial counselling service is received from hopeful debt collection agencies.

[27] For details of the issues see McGahen, B. *'Do not pass go, do not collect $100'*, Social Research and Evaluation Ltd. 1981.

Limitations such as these also apply to financial counselling to people who don't have any money, and to personal support for women who want proper child care and a job.

Conclusion: Services to families?

With their potential and their limitations, how do programs such as the Family Support Services Scheme rate as an instrument of explicit family policy? While they fit Kahn's specifications — 'family based and family oriented' (Kahn, 1980), one fundamental problem is the way the position of women can be obscured.

As for the role of the state in family life, there is no 'fine line between facilitation and regulation' (Campbell, 1981:9). There is only the constant tension between the demands of subordinate groups on the resources of the state.[28] Even were the price of universal social services to be paid, there would be no certainty of personal well-being. Particular circumstances will always be mitigating, and require intervention which only the state can reasonably provide. The test of whether this provision is in the best interests of the family will be in terms of participation in and control over services (as processes), but most of all, in terms of its outcomes: are circumstances changed in the ways people want? Different circumstances will also determine the legitimacy of intervention.

The history of state intervention into the lives of families has always been problematic. On the one hand, there is the tradition of heavy-handedness and on the other, of neglect and abnegation. In the current cost-efficient scramble to deinstitutionalise, another possibility looms.[29] Switching to smaller, community based alternatives avoids the worst of institutional regulation — *if* economies are not borne locally or responsibilities transferred

[28] See Campbell's benign formulation, following Kahn, of 'The role of government' 1980:9.

[29] Deinstitutionalisation has already had significant impact on some youth services operating in the Kings Cross area in Sydney which some people won't use because of all the 'maddies' hanging about.

back to unassisted families, *if* local control does not degenerate into parochial control and *if* service planning and development do not become dislocated and uncoordinated.

There must be acceptance of the responsibility of an ongoing need for support for some people. That same 'self-help' motivation that is pushing aside the patronising and inflexible practices of the past, can degenerate into little more than individual responsibility.[30] Which brings us back to the beginning — the risk of slipping back to the inequitable burden of individual and family responsibility depending upon the unequal capacity of different families to cope, and the further unequal responsibilities within those families upon women.

Stemming as it does from the Children's Services Program, the reach of the Family Support Services Scheme is too wide. The pilot program has demonstrated the effectiveness of supportive accommodation, housing information and referral services which housing authorities in Victoria at least have now taken up. Financial counselling should be incorporated in a similar way into a comprehensive set of consumer services. The inclusion of these as 'services for families' would draw attention to the critical impact of housing and fiscal policies on families. Such services must not, however, continue to be contained by the spurious 'family' eligibility requirement. This should result in a return of the specific focus of the Scheme within the Children's Services Program to the provision of children's services, although in flexible forms.

While the state of children's services is as undeveloped as it is, any funds available to the Children's Services Program should be used for children's services.[31] Raids on these funds, even for other worthwhile projects, cannot be tolerated. The location of the Children's Services Program in the Commonwealth's welfare department has encouraged the slippage of children's services into welfare categories. More substantial funding is needed to support families than a bit taken from the child care budget. Commitments in the primary policy areas of employment, taxation, housing, health and education are called for.

Beyond this, personal support, such as information, referral and advocacy, needs to be accessible and flexible and can probably best be organised as universal provisions through fully funded, local children's and community services.

The beginnings of a more flexible and developmental model might be the centre-based outreach program proposed by the Management Committee in New South Wales and, in Victoria,

[30] The most traumatic example I've encountered is a self-help bandaging program for post-operative mastectomy patients.

[31] See Brennan, D. (1982) for details of the state of children's services in Australia.

through the Neighbourhood House program. Both these programs are premised on the notion of children's services being the most basic form of family support,[32] and both acknowledge that for many women, child care is not all they want. Women with babies, for example, may have quite different needs and preferences from some others; women in the workforce will want flexible arrangements to coordinate with their full, part-time or shift work; unemployed women, too, will have particular requirements.

Without this flexibility and without some outreach functions many women and children most in need will not benefit. From the basis of children's services, other general activities (for example, information, education) and services (for example, crisis, self-help groups) can be developed. The anomalous use of the word 'family' as a service description or eligibility criterion should be discarded because it neither specifically targets any particular group nor indicates what services are being offered. That the word 'family' has been used to describe services as diverse as legal advice in relation to financial issues for an aged widow, weekend playgroups for children of single fathers and intensive personal support for psychiatric patients whose children have already been institutionalised, is evidence of its rhetorical rather than explanatory power.

Certainly there have been strong indications of need for and benefit from the range of services provided under the FSS Scheme. No arguments have been advanced here for priorities or effectiveness. Rather, the anomalies and limitations of personal welfare supports to families have been examined.

The special needs of particular groups will require additional planning and resources and should not be off-loaded onto generalist services, disrupting their programs and depleting their resources. Although special programs should be coordinated wherever possible with general ones, the responsibility for intensive and ongoing assistance for some people cannot be abnegated in the name of 'community support' or worse, 'self-help'. Similarly, the competing demands of crisis intervention and prevention will not be resolved because of a preference for developmental programs. Residual problems still face us.

Nor will alternatives to residential care simply emerge from general children's or community services. Alternatives need to be integrated with such services but require additional resources and quite specific service, administrative and accountability provisions.

[32] See Silcock, A., 'Principles of effective day care', *Australian Journal of Early Childhood*, Vol. 6 No. 1, 1981.

Whether as a 'haven in a heartless world or site of oppression and inequality' (Barrett and McIntosh, 1982), the failures of the family can be neither understood nor overcome by adopting a position which attempts to foster individualism and individual independence. The role of the state in its general social policies has crucial implications for shaping the conditions under which families function and the level of their material resources. Similarly, the organisation and provision of personal welfare reflects, and mostly confirms, the tradition of household arrangements that places onto women the burden of responsibility for care within the family and the wider community.

To sustain the functions which families perform, 'the Commonwealth and State governments have a joint responsibility to develop a complementary, mutually enhancing set of universal and particular social services' (Campbell, 1981:10). The ways these are arranged will influence the equity both *between* families and *within* them.

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ISSN 0811 4196